

A Known Constant

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Summary: Follow up to Exam Relief. As graduation looms closer, the boys face new hardships. What will one do when faced with potential abandonment? What does L have to do with any of this? MxNxN and slight LxLight

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AN: First and foremost, if you haven't read my story Exam Relief, ya need to stop and go do that. This is a follow up to that story. I mean, I'm sure it stands alone pretty well. But yeah no. Go read Exam Relief first!

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A Known Constant

Near awoke surrounded in a cocoon of warmth as he had most mornings for the past few months. And it was the first day of term break meaning he would be able to just lay there and enjoy it. No reason or rush to get up and head back to his own room before the rest of the orphanage awoke. A chance to relax and enjoy himself. He smiled, burying his face into the chest he was currently laying on and wiggled back into the body wrapped around him. He felt happy and content and normal.

Outside this bedroom where other people existed, nothing had changed. He was still rank 1 without any obvious struggles in his studies and Mello was the disgruntled second. Matt his ever present shadow. To the others, nothing had changed. But it was the small things that let Near know their dynamic had truly shifted. Mello no longer raged or ranted at him when he received a lower test score. He didn't trip him in the hallways or set up any elaborate pranks. It wasn't that he was outwardly kinder but that he had well, Mello had mellowed out. And sometimes there were small tokens of affection left on his desks: a piece of his favourite sweets, that book he had really wanted, a blonde Lego man, and an auburn Lego man. And Matt? Matt still did

things much the same. But it was in the way that he would ruffle his hair while walking down the hallway or the fact that he seemed to shadow him as well.

And it wasn't that Mello or Matt made him return to his own room. If fact, it was quite the opposite. They wanted him to stay, to move more of his own belongings and loose the robot façade. It was by his own choice that they kept it to themselves. Matt and Mello were a known constant throughout the whole of the building. Literally, the only person who didn't know was Roger. Mainly because he was an obnoxious, arrogant twit but that is beside the point. And it was also well established that Mello hated Near. These were just truths of Whammy's Institute. Truths that Near did not want to upset. It would disrupt the ebb and flow of day to day life. It would be a drastic change that would warp his known world. The known world of Whammy's. He couldn't do that to everyone. He might seem cruel and heartless from the outside. But that was his mask, not who he truly was. At least, those were the reasons he gave himself and Matt and Mello.

Truth was, he was scared. Terrified. It had been months and all they had showed him was love and adoration. He felt wanted and needed and yet there was a small part of him telling him it was all a joke. A cruel prank. That at some point they would laugh and say 'Oh, you thought we _actually_ loved you? I can't believe you're so gullible.' And it would break him completely. One hundred percent. But had to be coming. They were older than him by a year. They would be leaving Whammy's first. Would graduate first. At some point, they would leave him. Leave him alone. Leave him forever while they were still together. It was a terror that gripped his very soul and left him grief stricken when he was alone in his own room.

But none of this was swimming through his mind as he was wrapped up in the arms of both his lovers. No, he wasn't thinking at all. Just feeling. Feeling loved and content. Loving in return. He loved being the first one awake. To be able to just lay there and drink it all in and to wait on them. To listen to Mello's gentle snores and Matt murmuring to himself. It just felt safe. He could feel the change in Matt's breathing, could feel him beginning to wake up. It was funny, the whole of the rest of the orphanage thought Matt was child who could not wake but truth was, Mello was the nightmare child. The harder it is to get to sleep, the harder it is to wake. And without -uh-hem- help, Mello had issues falling asleep. Couldn't really shut off his brain. Needless to say, he was almost always the last one to wake.

"Hmmm," Matt groaned as he came too, doing his best to stretch without jostling the other two. "You awake already, Love?"

"'course I am," Near tilted his head so he could look into those smiling forest green eyes. He never got over being able to look Matt in the eye or how gorgeous that particular shade of green was. Always breathtaking. And he only ever got to see them when they were in the dark of this room. Near had asked about that. The constant need for those fucking goggles and why they kept the room so dim. Turns out, Matt had a bitch of a whore for a mother that had kept him locked in a cupboard while she serviced her clientele. His eyes never learned how to cope with light and it resulted in a severe case of photosensitivity. He suffered from severe migraines without the goggles he'd designed them himself when sunglasses had not seemed

to work. Near had understood but he still wished for the ability to view his eyes more.

"Were ya even gonna wake me up?" Matt ran his free hand through Near's colorless curls. "Gonna give me a kiss good morning before you go slippin' off into the wee hours of the morn?"

"Wasn't really planning on slippin offâ€¦ moreso was just gonna lay here and enjoy the lack of classes and expectationsâ€¦ plus I am like super fuckin' cozy right now," He smiled up at the other boy, leaning into the hand playing with his hair.

"Goodâ€¦ fucking hate having you sneak off every morningâ€¦ kinda makes me feel a little cheatedâ€¦ makes us feel a little cheated. We are very pro morning cuddles, ya know."

"Hmmm," Near hummed, settling back down against Matt's chest. "I can see why."

"â€¦. You could stayâ€¦ every timeâ€¦" Matt stared down at the boy laying on his chest, waiting to judge his reaction. They had had this conversation before and every time it went the same way. He didn't know why he kept trying, only that he hoped Near would change his mind this time. It was killing him, watching Near tear himself apart like this, sobbing alone in his roomâ€¦ if only he would just talk to them.

"Hmmmâ€¦ don't wanna upset the -"

"I knowâ€¦ you don't want to upset the routineâ€¦ but this is so hard on youâ€¦" Matt was quiet, letting Near think on that for a few moments. He could feel Near stiffening against him, could feel the robot mask slipping back into place. "Hey, it's okayâ€¦.it's okay to be scared."

"I am not scared." Near's protest was almost immediate. And if it had not been for the fact that Mello was laying practically on top of Near, he probably would have tried to run away or at the very least, pulled back.

"Shhhâ€¦ It's okay. It's very normal to be scared. You don't have to be scared alone. You can talk to us." Matt was talking to the ceiling now, knowing that Near was probably doing his damndest to ignore and/or to attempt to berate him. "Ya know, the first time Mello kissed me, he ran away. He fucking kissed meâ€¦ and then he ran away. When I caught up to him, he was in our room crying his fucking eyes out. Mels is still super religious, ya know. Not like you or Iâ€¦ He kept going on and on about how it was a sin and God was going to hate him. We're fifteen years old and he's freaking out 'cause he thinks some almighty God is going to smite him for kissing another boy. He was fucking terrified. So I did the only thing I could think of. I grabbed his face, holding him still and forcing him to look at me. Took my goggles off and kissed him again and again until he kissed me back. And then I told him 'If loving you is a sin, I don't wanna be right. I'll wait till you're there too.' And then he fuckin' cried even harder. I held him while he criedâ€¦ he asked me again if I'd wait for him to be okayâ€¦. And I did. He talked to meâ€¦ we talked it outâ€¦ I waited and he talked it out with me and we worked it out. We got thereâ€¦ It's normal to be terrifiedâ€¦ but you don't have to go it alone."

"I'm notâ€¦ the cameraâ€¦. In my room?" Near went limp against him, resigning himself to the conversation. Both of them were glad that Mello was an extremely heavy sleeper.

"Wellâ€¦ yeahâ€¦ they're not exactly _my_ cameras. I like to make L work for the ability to check up on usâ€¦ and by that I mean I totally made it impossible for L to check up on Mello and I's room. And well, you got up to leave one morning and I remembered I hadn't done the same for your room. So, I loaded up my baby, pulled up your roomâ€¦ and there you were. And I wanted nothing more than to go to youâ€¦ and then I realized this was why you were going to your room. To hide that from us. Don't worry, Mels doesn't knowâ€¦ I justâ€¦" Matt resumed stroking Near's hair. Near's free hand that had been resting on his rest clawed at his skin and then relaxed. "Near, love, I don't know what you're terrified of or what to do to help you. Please, talk to usâ€¦ please."

Matt was met with silence. All you could hear here was Mello's soft snores. Near had buried his face again, hiding any and all expressions from Matt. But that was okay. Matt knew he was at war with himself. He still did not want to admit to himself that he was scared. How could he talk to them about it? But he hadn't gone stiff so that must have been a good sign. Right? They were both so quiet and it wasn't until Mello began to stir that he felt more than heard Near whisper against his skin. "Don't leave me aloneâ€¦."

"I won't ever. Promise." Matt pulled himself up, placing a kiss on Near's forehead before shifting out from under him. He whined, gripping at the auburn boy. "Shh, love. Relax. I'm gonna go run the two of you a bath. You've both got to be insanely sore after last night."

As Matt's naked form disappeared into the bathroom, Near felt Mello's arms tighten around him. He felt the blond burrow his face between his shoulder blades as the sound of running water poured out of the bathroom door. Mello groaned, signaling he was finally awake and Near felt the brush of his eyelashes against his back. He let a soft sigh escape his lips as Mello placed a series of butterfly kisses up his spine before lying his cheek against Near's. "Morning, baby."

"Hmmmâ€¦ Morning, Mello."

"Hmmmâ€¦. It seems to be a very good morning." Near could feel Mello smiling against his cheek. He was always so chipper first thing in the morning if he woke up on his own. Near and Matt had no clue how or why but they found it very amusing. "Woke up and my sheep is still in my bedâ€¦. But where did my Mattie go?"

"He's running us a bathâ€¦ says we'll both be soreâ€¦" Near sighed, happy that Mello could not see his face. Matt's words still weighed heavily on him and he enjoyed a chipper morning Mello far too much to let him see.

"Ahâ€¦.. We have the best boyfriend, don't we," Mello was smiling as he rolled Near to face him, placing a chaste kiss on his lips. "Play with my hair?" He smiled, resting his head on Near's chest and waiting for those pale fingers to run through his golden hair. Near let a soft smile work across his lips as he began to play, his

fingers leaving random plaits in their wake. It was a nice distraction as he waited for Matt to finish up with the bathroom and he swore he could feel Mello purring against him.

"Now aint this shit adorable," Matt was kneeling beside the bed, watching Near play with Mello's hair, a goofy smile slapped across his face. Mello turned his head and all but growled as he swatted at the ginger.

"Fuck youâ€|"

"What? Only sweet to Near this morning?" Matt caught the hand swatting at him and nuzzled it gently before leaning up to place a kiss on both their foreheads. "Now come on, get up." He tugged a groaning Mello to his feet before pulling Near to the edge of the bed and lift him up and wrap his legs around him. "Come on, you will feel loads better after you've had a soak. You know it, come on."

Mello allowed Matt to drag him along, groaning about being out the bed the entire way. Near smiled at Mello's antics as he adjusted in Matt's hold. Yes, a bath would be quite worth it, especially with how relaxed it would allow Mello to become. He hid his grin into Matt's shoulder as he remembered his first bath with Mello. It had been the morning after Mello's birthday and he had awoken to find his face buried in Mello's chest, the sound of water running, and Matt nowhere to be found. The water stopped and he had felt a dip in the bed. Matt had whispered Mello awake before lifting a very sore Near from the bed. Whining had ensued while Matt cooed and whispered in his ear, telling him it would help with the pain. He had been promptly sat in Mello's lap within the warmth of a very hot bath. It had felt lovely and Mello had instantly wrapped his arms around the smaller boy and laid back in the tub, feet propped up, and fingers rubbing at the base of his spine. And he had started talking non-stop, sweet nothings and the like. It had been shocking. Many similar soaks had followed.

Mello groaned in relief as he lowered himself into the tub. "Yessssssssssssssssss," he hissed. "Fuck, thanks Mattie." He settled himself against the back of the tub, enjoying the steam billowing around him. Near gave Matt a peck on the cheek before hopping down, "Thank you, Matt." He smiled briefly before crawling in and settling against Mello's chest. The heat felt amazing against the soreness engulfing his ass and lower back. Yesâ€|. This was nice. This is what he had been missing in running off every morning. Good morning fluff and relaxing soaks in the tub. Instead he had been running off to be all alone and miserable. Maybe Matt was right, because this felt like his place. This felt like how he should be spending his mornings. With heat numbing his pain and comfort wrapping him up. Soft kisses and cuddles in the bed.

"Your welcome, loves." He smiled, placing fresh towels on the toilets for when they were finished. "Imma go grab us some breakfast while you lot soak. You enjoy your soak. I'll be back shortly." He left the bathroom, closing the door behind him before digging around his room for some sort of clothing. He settled for a pair of boxers, a slightly crumbled t-shirt, and his goggles pulled down over his shaggy mop of hair. He shrugged his shoulders, at least it was all clean and it was actually his. Better than most mornings and the whole of the orphanage could agree.

He locked up the door behind him and started his slow meandering to the kitchens. It was rather late in the morning, cussing on the verge of the noon hour, and it being the first day of break, most of the older children were still sleeping. It was the youngsters who could be seen parading around the public areas and could be seen darting through the halls. There were a few others stumbling round just like him but they were all happy to ignore Matt. He loved it, how easily people would ignore him.

"Hey, Matt!" He heard Linda call at him, interrupting his musings. Guess not everyone actively ignored him. He stopped, allowing the short artist to catch up, not really answering her call but nodding for her to continue. "Have you seen Near? Seems that Roger is asking after him."

"Why the fuck would I know?" Matt shrugged at her. Of course he knew where Near was but he had long been asked to keep it quiet. He would do as his younger lover asked and keep his mouth shut. Plus fucking with Linda was fun. He actually liked the poor girl, wasn't as stuck up as everyone else.

"I dunno. You're just like the only person who ever knows where he isâ€¦" She blushed a little, looking down at her feet.

"I'm not his keeper. Did ya check his fuckin room?" Yeah, he knew he was laying it on pretty thick, but damn was Matt hungry.

"I didâ€¦. And he wasn't thereâ€¦. Do you have any clue where else he might be? Roger made it seem like really important." She seemed antsy, shifting her weight from foot to foot. Hands fidgeting. Refused to meet his eyes, granted they were covered. What the fuck did Roger do? Threaten to take all her supplies if she couldn't turn up the tiny albino? What a twat.

"Well, if I had to give it my best bet, I'd say he's pretty fucking fond of the den up on the third floor. Ya know, the one in the back everyone else avoids. Keeps a stash of legos up there and whatnot." He waved in the general area he was describing. It was true, that was where Near like to hide out, normally. "Ya need anything else, I'm grabbing a fucking bite to eat."

"Thank you so much, Matt!" She jumped up, forcing a hug onto ginger techie. "You've been loads a'help!" And with that, she darted off to the room Matt described, taking her obnoxious talking with her. It was too early in his day to be dealing with actual people. Returning to his search for food, Matt brushed off the encounter.

He walked into the kitchens, forgoing the cafeteria knowing it would be swamped with tiny children. Besides, the cooks liked him well enough and he was always polite enough with them. Shooting one of the chefs a charming smile, he asked if there was any of breakfast leftover. Receiving a pat on the head from the head chef, he was told to wait just a moment and they'd take a look. Smiling sweetly, he drummed his fingers against the counter while he waited. They came back with a double chocolate chunk muffin and some eggs and toast for Matt.

"Actually, is there any way I can get some more toast? Maybe some jamâ€¦ or some juice?" He shot them another sweet smile, hoping they wouldn't ask any questions. While they did shoot him some queer

looks, no questions were asked. They even came up with a bowl of assorted fresh fruits which would be a lovely snack never to be eaten later. "Thank you so much. Promise I'll get the tray back to you later, ya?" Smiling, complimenting them, and promising he'd help clean up later, Matt ducked out the doors again. They all knew it be a week before they saw that tray again.

Matt turned around, tray out in front of him as the door behind him closed, to find L standing before him. Well, not right before him. More like across the hallway, standing to the side of the entrance hall. And there was Linda, almost in tears, attempting to talk with him. Hands waving around. She did seem rather worked up, probably because Near was nowhere to be found. He tried to slowly slink down the opposite hallway before L could catch sight of him. And failed miserably.

"Matt!" he heard the raven haired detective call to him. "Matt, quit trying to run away and come over here for a moment."

Sighing, Matt turned to face the detective, nodding to acknowledge he had heard him. He by no means rushed himself but did make his way to his mentor, the mentor of the whole orphanage. "Yes? Did ya need something? Cause like, I ain't got my tech with me. Can't do up your computer in the walkway." He shot him a cheeky grin, knowing the detective would not react one way or the other but it would work real well to piss the rest of them off. And it did. Roger was obviously prickling, ready to pounce and give Matt yet another detention. Watari's mustache twitched slightly. Linda gasped, hand going up to her chest and everything. And L's boytoy, excuse me, his assistant, noticeably rolled his eyes.

"Matt, Linda tells me that Near is nowhere to be found." L's face stayed completely blank, emotionless, no reaction what so ever to Matt's usual brash attitude. He did quirk a knowing eyebrow when he asked Matt he's question. "Do you know where he is?"

"As I told Linda earlier, I've got no fucking clue. I ain't his handler." Matt attempted to match L's blank facial expression. He gave him a nod before attempting to slink off again.

"Really?" While his face stayed blank and unmoving and the tone of his voice barely changed, he did make it quite obvious he didn't believe him for one second.

"Yeah, really. I just woke up. Look, breakfast," he shook the tray at the group surrounding him. "How the fuck would I know where the sheep is?"

"Oh, yes, breakfast, I see. Seems like a lot of food for two people."

"Really? Then you must not be doing it right."

That got a smile out of L while the whole of everyone else looked ready to beat Matt. Light blushed such a brilliant shade of red, he almost matched Matt's hair. It took everything Matt had not to grin or giggle. Keep it together, he told himself. He can do this. But it also allowed him to tell L that yes, he did know where Near was but he wasn't going to say it flat out right here.

"Hmmmâ€¦. Maybe I'm not. Fine. I'll find Near later. I need to talk to you and Mello as well," He nodded, acknowledging what Matt was trying to say and letting him know that he would not out him as such. "Walk me to your room? I assume Mello is awake as well."

"Yes, yes he is," Matt turned to walk back to his room, knowing L would follow him while Watari attempted to keep Roger from strangling Matt. "Did you receive my email? You never sent me a response."

"The one about moving up Near's graduation date?" L waited until they were alone before responding. He knew this was a private matter to Matt which is why he had chosen to send a personal email instead of going through Roger. No one was supposed to have L's email but L had long since learned not to question what Matt was capable of. Matt nodded in response, focusing on not tipping the tray full of food onto the floor. "I did receive it. I have not yet discussed the matter with Roger or Watari. I wanted to speak with Near first."

"L! Really? But I told you how important this was! I don't generally act on likeâ€¦. Anything. I only just got that article on my chemistry project written up. This is important." Matt stopped in the middle of the hallway, staring at L with a look of disbelief. He had messaged L weeks ago about moving Near's graduation forward. He knew if he asked Roger himself, he'd be likely to tell him to fuck off in the most polite of ways. And Near would never ask for himself. Mello had no clue that Near was scheduled to graduate the year after them.

"I wanted to speak with him first but it seems you are refusing to disclose his whereabouts." L gave Matt a knowing look before continuing down the hallway. "I want to know that he wants this as well before pushing it through. What would it look like if I pushed his graduation forward and the two of you just went off on your own?"

"Why would I ask you to push it forward if we was just planning to go off and leave him on his own?" Matt was obviously distraught. "Mello doesn't even know that Near doesn't graduate with us! I'm trying to take care of it without either of em havin to worry bout it."

"I know this, Matt," L stopped outside the appropriate door. "Key?"

"Yeah, yeah, here. Fucking hold this," He handed L the tray and dug the key from beneath his shirt on the chain he generally kept it on. "But you better not fucking say anything stupid or insensitive. Near already feels insecure about something and he won't say a word about it to Mels or I. Fucking promise or I ain't letting you in."

"I promise not to be my usual insensitive bastard self while speaking to your boyfriends. Cross my heart or whatever else you wish me to say." Pure sarcasm. Maybe the rest of the world couldn't see it, but L really was a sarcastic little shit. He always had that little shit-eating grin when nobody else was looking. And it felt like only Matt knew. Light probably knew as well. Everyone else thought he was fucking brilliant and worshiped the ground he walked on. Ridiculous.

"I mean it," Matt shot him a glare before opening the door. He quickly rushed L in before shutting the door behind him. "Gimme a

minute, they're having a soak." He took the tray from L and sat it on the free space on one of the desks. Now he had to go about finding clothes for his boyfriendsâ€¦ which was extremely aggravating because he had been planning on spending the majority of his break completely nude. Mello was easy, find him a pair of clean silk boxers and he'd be alright with that. Near was different, more modest and all that. While he and Mello had managed to convince Near to keep a few spare outfits in their room, all of them were dirty. There was one last clean pair of pants. Hopefully he would agree to wear one of Matt's clean t-shirts. He shouldn't have anything against any of the nerdy logos. After quickly telling L yet again to not fuck anything up, he darted into the bathroom.

"Hello, loves," he smiled at the sight before him. Mello was completely sprawled out, one leg thrown out over the edge of the tub completely and the other propped up on the facet. He had one arm tucked under his head and the other draped over Near's back. And there was Near, just languidly draped across Mello's torso, enjoy the fuck out of his soak. The duo turned to face him, smiling sweetly and each reaching an arm out to pull Matt down for a kiss. He obliged them, kneeling beside the tub to deliver a kiss to each of them. "Hmmm, having a lovely soak?"

"Yes," Mello smiled, running the fingers of his free hand through Near's hair. Near nodded, completely enjoying the fingers massaging his scalp. "It's been quite lovely. Did you bring breakfast?"

"Yes, course I did," He smiled before leaning forward to drain the tub. "But I also brought back an L who apparently wants to have a talk with us. So you need to put some on some clothes."

"What?" "For fucking real?!"

"Yes, I know. I thought he wasn't coming round till Wednesday but here he isâ€¦ and he is literally out in our room sooooâ€¦." Matt grabbed at the towels before helping the other two boys to stand up and begin drying off. "Near, I'm sorry but we are all out of your clean clothes. I have one of my t-shirts if that's alright."

"That is perfectly fine, Matt," Near gave Matt a sweet smile before going to towel off his dripping hair. "What does L want to speak about?"

"Fuck if I know," Matt shrugged before handing Mello his boxers. He waited for both his lovers to be dressed before opening the bathroom door and letting all the steam escape.

L was crouched in the office chair at Mello's desk, picking at the fruit on the tray. He looked up, nodding at his top three protÃ©gÃ©s. Matt threw the dirty towels in the hamper and flopped down on the floor against the bed opposite L. Mello took his muffin from the breakfast tray and dropped down on the bed behind Matt, completely unashamed of the mess they had made of the sheets the night before. L had known about Matt and Mello before the rest of the orphanage, of course he knew when Near had become a part of it as well. Near stood there sheepishly for a moment, looking at his feet and probably contemplating the robot facade before he ultimately decided on grabbing a piece of toast, applying jam, and placing himself on the floor beside Matt, curling into his side as the older boy wrapped his arm around him.

"So," Mello looked their mentor dead in the eye, taking a bite of his muffin, "What's up?"

"I wanted to discuss your plans come graduation." L gave them all a pointed look and noticed how uncomfortable Near seemed to be. "You plan to go off and start up your investigation team, correct?"

"Yeah, kind of like a one off the L organization," Mello nodded, completely unaware of the troubles running through his youngest lover's mind. "Like, maybe working for you but like off on our own. In our own townâ€¦ but like still for you. Maybe your feet on the ground in some cases."

"Wellâ€¦. Mels can do the fucking foot work. I'll be on the computers as always," Matt nodded in agreement with Mello. "I'm not about that running around. He'll get us all killed if I'm running about mucking it all the fuck up." He could feel Near squirming beside him. Looking down at his toast with distaste, Near placed it on the floor beside him before dragging his fingers through his hair, twisting at it aggressively.

"Yes, I just wanted to make sure of it. We do need to make sure we have the proper location for the new base we are attempting to set up for you," L nodded, licking at the sticky juices running down his fingers. "I also had one more concern."

"Yes?" Mello nodded, finishing the last of his muffin.

"All of you?"

"Parden?"

"All of you?"

"I don't understand the question." Mello was completely confused. At this point, it is important to understand that he has spent the entirety of his career at the Whammy's Institution believing that Near was his equal. Yes, he was younger than him but he had always been his rival and his equal. Never once did it cross his mind that Near was not considered to be his equal by anyone else. Near, on the other hand, had always known that he was a year behind the older boys. While Mello was assuming Near was coming with them, no questions asked. Near believed he was being left behind. "Of course we're going. What are you asking?"

"Well, I think he's asking if - " Matt could feel Near tensing against him. He was noticeably uncomfortable and stressed. He was angered and upset. Whatever had been bothering him these last few months, it was culminating on this moment. Matt could feel it.

"You're going to leave?" Near interrupted Matt's explanation. Oh if only he had been able to keep himself reigned in a few moments longer. The room grew oddly quiet. L was content to let the three of them fight it out but was not used to Near actually emoting. It was quite an interesting development. He had not been counting on this when he planned out his approach. "Youâ€¦. You're going to leave me behind?"

"Wait what?" Mello looked completely taken aback. Where was this coming from? Near took this completely the wrong way. Instead of "what do you mean, of course you're coming with us" he took it as "what the fuck do you mean, you think we'd take you with us?" It was finally happening. This was it. Near, you fucking twat, of course they don't love you.

"No, Near, wai-" Matt tried again to explain but Near shot up, stopping whatever 'lies' Matt was going to attempt to feed him.

"Iâ€¦. you're leaving me? Am I a joke?" He never shouted. Never attempted blows or anything like that. But his voice did begin the shake and he refused to meet anyone's eyes. "Am I just a joke to you? This whole fucking time? I'm just something for you to leave behind? I-i-â€¦." He could not even finish his questions but he knew he could not stay here. They were laughing at him, weren't they? The whole group of them were having a laugh. Look at Near, so stupid as to think Matt and Mello actually wanted him. Even loved him. He could feel them staring at him, judging him. He couldn't stand it. Couldn't stand the thought of having them all laugh at him. He darted from the room before anybody could say anything. They had all seen the tears starting to slip down his cheeks before he ran.

"L, you absolute twat!" Matt jumped to his feet. "I told you not to be a fucking ass! Look at the fucking mess you've made!"

"Waitâ€¦ what the fuck is happening?" Mello looked up at Matt with wide eyes, confusion etched into every line of his face. "What the fuck did I miss?"

"Technically, Near doesn't graduate this year. He graduates next year," L explained it so calmly, picking at a piece of toast now that the fruit had lost his interest.

"What? Who the fuck made that decision?"

"Hmmm, Roger. He is younger than you. He graduates after you. Matt asked for me to have him pushed forward but I haven't talked to Roger or Watari about it yet. I wanted to talk with you about it first." He had spread copious amounts of jam across his toast and made a right mess of himself in doing so.

"Wow, you are a fucking twat," Mello just stared at his mentor. This asshat had run Near off because he wanted to see what they would say? And then of course Mello had no fucking clue and made it worse. Near probably thought he assumed he was leaving him behind. That he thought Near was just a toy to fuck with, literally.

Matt hadn't even bothered to stay back to explain anything to Mello. Near had just taken off in tears because he thought they were going to leave him behind. What was it he had asked him this morning? To never leave him alone. And then L had to be a fucking twat and make it seem like he and Mello planned to fuck him and leave him. Near had vacated the immediate vicinity by the time Matt made it out of the doorway. That tiny albino fuck was quick. He chose a direction at random and set out, running frantically through the halls of Whammy's. Taking a corner at break neck speeds, Matt ran almost smack into Linda.

"Linda! Oh thank fucking god!" He grabbed the girl's shoulders, all but shaking the girl frantically. "Linda, have you seen Near?"

"Iâ€¦ actually, yes? He just ran past me?" She looked so confused. Nobody knew where he was earlier and now Matt was chasing him through the hallways? Insane.

"Yeah, and?" Matt seemed a bit manic, ready to dart off at any moment.

"Um, he went that way?" She motioned to the stairwell leading up to the next floor. "What, uh, what's going on?"

Matt didn't bother to answer, instead he took off after Near. Poor Linda was left there standing confused before Mello followed by L asked her the same question. Matt took the stairs three at a time, knowing that Near was heading for familiar, for known territory. He was going to his den with his legos and no people. Because he and Mello and L were fucking stupid ass buggers. Just really. So fucking stupid. Child was so afraid of being left alone and L goes and makes it look like they were gonna do it on purpose. So fucking stupid.

He rounded the corner, running into the den to find Near crouched behind the sofas, sobbing. He knew that some people had seen him running through the hallways where going to start crowding around so he slammed the door shut on those nosey fuckers. He jumped the couch to land in front of the smaller boy, trying to grab at him, to console him. Near just jerked away, wanting to be left alone.

"Near, please-"

"Noâ€¦ Noâ€¦ I don..tâ€¦. noâ€¦" He was hiccupping, whipping at his face. "P-p-pleaseâ€¦. I-i-â€¦"

"Shhh," Matt grabbed ahold of Near's arms, stilling the boy. He stared at him, pulling off his goggles to look him straight in the eyes, no obstructions. Finally, Near allowed Matt to pull him into his arms. "Shhhhâ€¦ we aren't going to leave you alone. I promiseâ€¦. We aren't going to leave you alone."

"Don't leave me alone," Near sobbed, grabbing at Matt's t-shirt. "Oh fucking god, don't leave me alone."

Matt just stroked the smaller boy's hair, continuing to hold him tightly. It wasn't until they were sitting there playing twenty fucking questions with L that he had understood what Near had meant when he asked to never be left alone. Whammy kids don't really talk about how they ended up there. It wasn't really wrong, just a weird sort of taboo. They just didn't do it. That didn't mean that Matt didn't know. It was just a side-effect of messing with computers. Near's mom had hung herself when he was small boy. Right there in the flat with him sitting there staring. He had been only 3 or 4 and stuck in that bloody flat with his mum's body swinging for 2 weeks before anybody found him. Sitting there, alone with his mother's corpse before the neighbors became concerned. Of course he didn't want to be fucking left alone. Last time he was alone, it was bloody fucking awful.

"Swear itâ€¦. Not fucking leaving you alone. Shhhhhhâ€¦. It's gonna be

alright. Never leaving you aloneâ€|."

From out in the hallway, Matt and Near could hear a chorus of cursing, "Get the fuck out the way! What the fuck you doing here? Yeah, Fuck off!" The door flew open and was slammed shut as Mello came marching in. "No, you fuck off too!" He had slammed the door in L's face. "Fucking insensitive twat-muffin."

Seething momentarily at the door he had slammed, Mello took a deep, calming breath before turning to take stock of the room. What he saw nearly broke his heart and instantly chased away the last vestiges of his anger. Matt, holding a sobbing Near tightly and rocking him back and forth while murmuring in his ear. Near just looked so broken, gripping Matt's shirt for dear life and leaning heavily into him. He stood still long enough to take it in and then was quickly crossing the room. As soon as he rounded the couch, he was on his knees, as close to Near's back as he could be without startling the boy.

"Mattieâ€|. What's going on?" He reached forward, running his fingers through Near's hair and down to his shoulder to attempt to lay a comforting hand on the child.

"He has been so afraid we were going to leave him here aloneâ€| and then L made it seem like we wereâ€| And that's his thing, Mels," Matt's green eyes stared into Mello's blue ones, hoping he would understand. "He's likeâ€| the way I get with small enclosed spacesâ€| His mom left him all alone in a tiny apartment with her still in itâ€| And he thought we were gonna leave him aloneâ€|"

"Jesus fuck, Near I am so fucking sorry. I didn't knowâ€| I didn't know any of it," Mello shifted closer, wrapping an arm around Matt's waist to pull them both into him as he wrapped himself around Near's back. The hand that had been on Near's shoulder was now in his hair, stroking it softly has managed to lay his head on the smaller boy's shoulder. "I promise we won't leave you alone. Fucking take you with us without Roger's say so if we have to but I promise you we will not leave you alone."

Mello pulled them in tighter to emphasize how much he meant what he said but after that there was no talking. Matt continued to rock the three of them while Mello continued to pet Near's hair in a calming manner. Near continued to sob, holding on to Matt's shirt with a death gripe while still mumbling his pleas to never be left alone. The older two occasionally murmured sweet nothings and calming platitudes. They stayed like that until Near was reduced to soft hiccups.

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AN: SOâ€|. Yeah. *shrugs* I would like to blame pre-semester boredom for this. There will be a part two that will be posted after exams are done. Like Pinky Promiseâ€| mainly because I'm not done.

End
file.